Ban Seng Hoe

Beyond the Golden Mountain

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Chinese Cultural Traditions in Canada

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Preface

Cultural traditions, when transplanted to a new land, are subjected to forces that cause them to change. These forces come from within the transplanted community or group and from without, in the larger or more dominant society. For more than a century, the Chinese in Canada have developed a heritage that blends many aspects of Canadian life with their ancestral traditions. *Beyond the Golden Mountain* focuses on some of these cultural traditions, which, rooted in China, found new expression in Canada.

To the Chinese, North America was known as Golden Mountain, a reference to the goldfields of California and British Columbia. It was the 1858 Fraser River gold rush that first attracted the Chinese in numbers to Canada. *Beyond the Golden Mountain* goes beyond the vision that initially drew the Chinese to Canada to the reality they confronted and eventually shaped.

A History of the Chinese in Canada

To understand better the cultural traditions of Chinese Canadians it is necessary to look at the historical, social, and community contexts in which they evolved and developed.

Arrival and Settlement

The Chinese first came to Canada in 1858 to work in the goldfields of the Fraser Valley. However, it was not until the construction of the final section of the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) from 1880 to 1884 that there was large-scale Chinese immigration. As many as 17,000 Chinese labourers came during the construction period. Chinese labour helped to complete the railway, thus fulfilling a condition for British Columbia's entry to Confederation and satisfying Prime Minister MacDonald's dream of a dominion from coast to coast.

While the importation of Chinese labour met with hostilities, it was essential for constructing the railway. Charles Crocker, a contractor of the Central Pacific Railway, once justified the hiring of Chinese by noting that any race who could build the Great Wall of China could also construct a railway.

The lives of the Chinese labourers were miserable. Many died in building the railway, from hardship, disease, and exposure in the wilderness.

Once the railway was completed, successive legislative regulations and laws were enacted with the purpose of discouraging Chinese immigration. Two royal commissions were appointed in 1885 and 1902 to investigate Oriental immigration. The Asiatic

Exclusion League was formed in Vancouver in 1907 and incited a riot against the Chinese and Japanese in the same year. Head taxes imposed on the Chinese were increased from $10 in 1884, to $50 in 1885, to $100 in 1900, and finally to $500 in 1904.

With continued protests and agitations against Chinese immigration, a Chinese exclusion law was enacted in 1923 which barred the entry of all Chinese. From 1923 until the repeal of this law in 1947, only 44 Chinese reportedly entered Canada. This period is known as the "dark age" in the history of Chinese immigration to Canada.

The Chinese first settled along the gold-rush, railway, and road-

A Chinese work gang for the Great Northern Railway, ca. 1909. (Courtesy of the Vancouver Public Library, neg. no. 1773)

construction routes in the Fraser Valley and Cariboo region; they then spread to other British Columbia towns and cities. In 1880–81, there were 4,383 Chinese in Canada; all but 33 lived in British Columbia. By 1921, the Chinese in Canada numbered 39,587; the majority still lived in that province.

After the completion of the CPR, large numbers of Chinese began to migrate to other parts of Canada. Around the turn of century, Chinese communities emerged in Edmonton, Calgary, Lethbridge, Saskatoon, Winnipeg, Toronto, Montréal, and Québec City. Somewhat later, concentrations of Chinese could be found in Fredericton, Saint John (New Brunswick), Halifax, Cape Breton, Charlottetown, and St. John's (Newfoundland). In 1971, there were 118,815 Chinese in Canada; by 1981, the number had almost doubled. They were mainly distributed in British Columbia, the Prairies, Ontario, and Quebec. Today Metropolitan Toronto has surpassed Vancouver and Victoria in the size and number of its Chinatowns.

The Chinese philosophy of the yin and yang is expressed photographically in the colour plates that follow. The outer face of Chinese-Canadian culture (the yang), the one most visible to the wider society, can be seen in the street-scene shots from various Chinatowns; the internal, more private side (the yin) is shown in the photographs of the artifacts, material testament to unique beliefs and customs.

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Fresh produce for sale on a sidewalk in Vancouver's Chinatown, 1988. (Photograph by J.-P. Camus and J. Lenczewski)

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Porcelain figures of the Three Immortals: (left to right) Emolument, Good Fortune, and Longevity. (Photograph by R. Garner, Canadian Museum of Civilization Collection)

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The gate of "shared prosperity" (tong ji men), the main entryway into Victoria's Chinatown, 1987. (Photograph by J.-P. Camus and J. Lenczewski)

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A porcelain dragon presented by the China-Canada Society to the City of Vancouver in 1945. (Courtesy of the Vancouver Museum; photograph by R. Garner)

Community Development

For the most part, the Chinese supported themselves through hard labour and their hand laundries, cafés, and grocery stores. The exception was in British Columbia where they also had small merchant businesses and found work in the mines, fish canneries, the lumber industry, garden markets, construction, shingle mills, and tailoring and shoe-making shops.

Associations formed the underlying community structure through which the early Chinese Canadians could function. These associations were based on shared clanship, kinship, dialect, geographical origins, political beliefs, occupations, and cultural interests. Through them the Chinese could interact with one another, receive protection and assistance and generally organize their lives together.

In most Canadian cities, there usually was (and still is) an umbrella organization commonly known as the Chinese Benevolent Association. This community association regulated disputes and conflicts among the local Chinese and represented the Chinese community to the larger society. Later, Christian missionaries began to work among the Chinese communities, and churches emerged. These churches also served as a bridge between the Chinese communities and the wider society. With greater degrees of acculturation, associations based on Western models began to arise and to serve various social, cultural, and recreational needs.

Most early Chinese immigrants settled in areas of downtown known as Chinatown. The emergence of a Chinatown was due partly to racial discrimination and partly to common needs, immigration experience and a desire to preserve Chinese sociocultural institutions in the new land. In the past, most of the Chinese associations were located in Chinatowns and most Chinese lived there. Only in Chinatown could they have a cup of tea among their own kind and only there could they celebrate a festival together. It was a focus of their communal life and activities.

It was within these social and community contexts that the old-world cultural traditions brought over by the early immigrants took root and spread into Canadian society.

Pender Street in Vancouver's Chinatown, 1928. (Courtesy of the Vancouver Public Library, neg. no. 22642)

Cultural Traditions

Eleven Chinese traditions and their processes of change and adaptation in Canada will be described. In some cases, one specific example will be focused on.

Clan Hall and Ancestor Commemoration

One of the traditional ways the Chinese organize themselves internally is through clan associations: the members of such an association can trace their descent to one or several ancestors through the paternal line. They adhere to a clan genealogy and use legends, myths, stories, and historical accounts to determine the identity of their ancestors. For example, the Huang Clan Association acknowledges Huang Xiang Gung, a well-known scholar-official of the Eastern Han period (A.D. 25–221) to be its ancestor. The Ma Clan Association regards Ma Fu Bo, a famous Han dynasty military commander, as its ancestor. The Long Gang Gong Suo, a multiple-surname association, honours Liu Bei, Guan Yue, Zhang Fei, and Zhao Yun.

A typical clan hall contains pictures of the association members, works of calligraphy, paintings, a framed list of executive members, acknowledgements of financial donations, banners, congratulatory messages from other associations, furniture, and other decor. In a central location, there is usually an altar. The altar consists of a portrait of the ancestor with a couplet from a poem or historical messages on each side and a table bearing an incense burner, joss-stick holders, flower vases, and plates for sacrificial food.

Most clan associations observe their ancestors' birthdays. The executive and members of the association gather together in front of the altar and stand in silence. They then bow three times to the portrait of their ancestor. The principal worshipper offers incense and wine; then the accompanying worshippers present sacrificial food, such as chicken, pork, cakes, fruits, and flowers. A eulogy is read detailing the history, moral conduct, glories, and achievements of the ancestor. The ceremony is concluded with a tea ceremony during which a few leaders or elders are asked to speak. They tell stories of the ancestor and remind those present that they are all descended from the same forefather just like water that flows from the same source. The ritual conveys a sense of common identity and group solidarity.

In addition to ancestor commemoration, the clan associations celebrate their foundation or relocation days in Canada.

The clan hall is one of the dominant forms of traditional associations. Others are political-fraternal organizations (such as the Freemasons and the Kuomintang), dialect and geographical associations, and music and opera societies.

The offering of a roast pig in commemoration of the dead, at the Chinese cemetery in Victoria, ca. 1900. (Courtesy of the Archives of the United Church of Canada, Victoria University, Toronto)

Community Festivals

The Chinese celebrate on two levels, as a family and as a community. Some festivals in which they partake as a community are the Spring Festival, a celebration of the New Year and the arrival of spring; Qing Ming (traditionally in April), an occasion for communal commemoration that takes place at graveyard pavilions; and the Dragon Boat Festival, a commemoration of the great Chinese poet Qu Yan of the Kingdom of Chu. The one described below, the Mid-Autumn Festival, is a harvest celebration. The moon, as in many harvest celebrations, figures prominently in this festival. This can be seen in three versions of how the Mid-Autumn Festival originated.

W.H. Yuen, whose British Columbia bakery has been in his family for three generations, makes moon cakes for the Mid-Autumn Festival, 1987. (Photograph by Ban Seng Hoe)

One legend tells of a wife named Chang E who stole the herb of longevity from her husband, Hou Yu. Well-known for shooting down nine suns from the sky, he became a tyrant. Fearing that the tyrant would become immortal, Chang E ate the herb herself. She then flew to settle in the moon and was later accompanied by a rabbit and an elderly man. Another legend has it that a popular Tang dynasty emperor, Ming Huang, dreamed that he visited the Moon Palace. He was very well-received by the goddess and the fairies and entertained by music and dances. To commemorate his dream, he ordered

a celebration for the moon. Still another version concerns a revolt against the Mongols. On the fifteenth day of the August moon, a message telling the people to raise up arms against the occupying Mongol regime was hidden in moon cakes. On finding the message, people all over the country rebelled and overthrew the Mongol empire.

Moon cakes are an important ritual food of the Mid-Autumn Festival. They are usually made of flour, sugar, lard, baking soda, yellow bean, black bean, lotus paste, melon seeds, almond, ham, and other ingredients. Although moon cakes come in different sizes, they are always round to symbolize the moon.

The Mid-Autumn Festival is celebrated with cultural events and parties at which fruit and moon cakes are served. At this time, moon cakes are on sale in most major Chinese communities across the country.

The Chinese community of Cape Breton participates with other town members in a local celebration. (Courtesy of Mr. and Mrs. Ken Wong of Grace Bay, Nova Scotia)

Family Traditions

The successive immigration restrictions and eventually the exclusion law deprived a majority of the early Chinese immigrants of a family life. Only a few merchants, businessmen, and church ministers were allowed to bring their families. It was not until after the Second World War that the members of long-separated families were allowed to re-unite.

Different forms of the Chinese family resulted from the restrictive laws: the old, established immigrant family; the long-separated and re-united family; the Canadian-born family; and the newly arrived family. Each form of family preserved and maintained Chinese traditions and customs at home to different degrees. Certainly, the absence of women and children in Chinese families before the Second World War made it difficult to maintain and continue family traditions. The lifting of immigration restrictions after the Second World War resulted in a revival of Chinese family life and traditions.

A Chinese-Canadian wedding in which the women wear traditional costumes and the men are dressed in Western attire. (Courtesy of the Vancouver Public Library, neg. no. 58900)

Today, life-cycle celebrations, festivals and rituals are observed by many Chinese-Canadian families. Some of these celebrations such as the New Year's celebration, ancestor commemoration, Qing Ming, the Dragon Boat Festival, and the Mid-Autumn Festival are carried on in modified or simplified forms. Weddings in particular are occasions for

celebration among the Chinese.

Marriages among Chinese Canadians usually follow a Western pattern, although some elements of the traditional wedding can still be found. Such betrothal and marriage rituals are a mixture of Chinese traditionalism and Western symbolism. Although Canadian-born Chinese adhere to the Western version of love and freedom in selecting spouses, a go-between is sometimes employed to arrange marriage between a man and woman from families of comparable status; friends and relations will also be involved in bringing a couple together. Some Chinese Canadians still avoid marrying persons of the same surname, but consultation of a fortune-teller to predict the compatability of a couple as was done in China is not observed.

In some cases, the bride's family announces the engagement by distributing traditional pastries and cakes to friends and relatives. Sometimes an announcement is also placed in newspapers. Although a bride price is seldom paid in money, the custom of giving gifts and food, such as a golden roast pig and oranges, is maintained to some degree. On the wedding day, the bride's parents may present the newlyweds with a dowry.

The wedding is usually conducted in a church, with a reception in a residence or restaurant. A banquet is an essential part of any Chinese wedding. The tradition of offering tea to the parents and relatives is observed, although the customs of kowtowing to elders and worshipping the heaven, the earth, and the ancestors have been discarded. Gifts and good wishes are offered to the newlyweds. Some guests may give chopsticks, dates, and lotus, the latter symbolizing the wish for the newlyweds to have children soon, especially a son. Unlike in traditional Chinese society, where the newlyweds would have become part of the groom's family, in Canada the couples set up their own households.

Chinese children at the Oriental Home and School in Victoria, 1913. (Courtesy of the British Columbia Archives and Records Service, cat. no. HP55487)

Food Traditions

The food tradition brought by the early Chinese immigrants was Cantonese: the cuisine was "down-home" village cooking. In the old Chinatowns where the immigrants used to concentrate, this kind of cooking with "village flavours" still persists.

Over the years, the "immigrant food" has undergone remarkable change in response to Canadian influence. Many café owners and cooks use local ingredients and spices to suit the palate and culinary pleasures of the local clientele. The result is a version of Chinese food known as chop suey; the cafés they operate are called chop-suey houses.

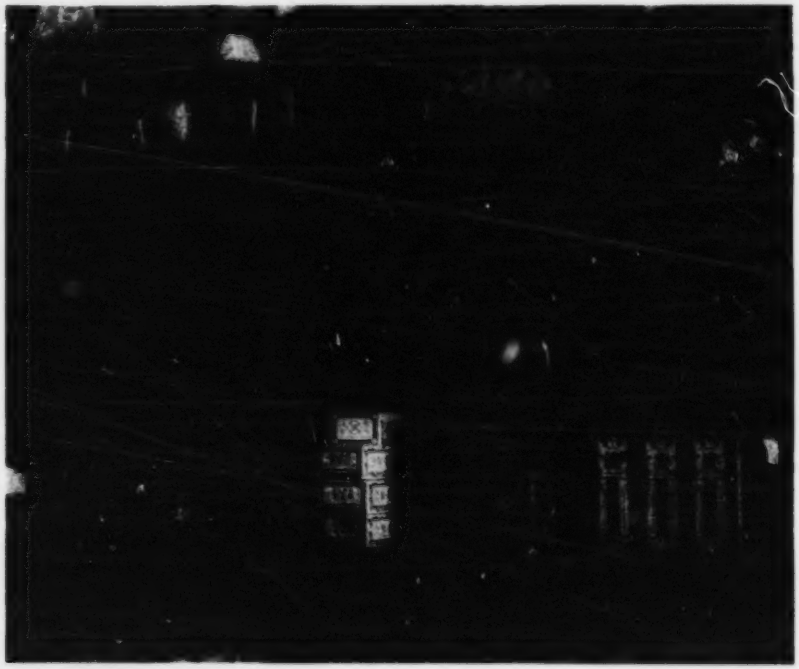
The popularity of Chinese food in Canada greatly increased after the Second World War. The demand came from personnel who had been exposed to this cuisine while overseas and from newly arrived Chinese immigrants from different parts of the world.

Today, many regional styles such as Szechhuan, Hunan, Beijing, Shanghai, Fujian, and Yunan attract a clientele appreciative of fine cuisine. By far, the most popular Chinese cuisine is still the Cantonese. It is known for its diversity, complex embellishments, and colourful garnishes. It is subtle, refined, and harmonious in its combination of different flavours. Chinese restaurants can be found in nearly every city and town in Canada. A majority of them serve Cantonese food and are owned by people of Cantonese origin.

Folk Medicine

The underlying philosophy of traditional Chinese medicine involves the maintenance of a delicate balance between one's internal conditions (the yin) and the external environment (the yang). The usual treatment procedures are herbal medicine, acupuncture, medical massage, and *qi gong* (a system of breathing exercises). Treatment deals with the specific disease as well as the overall health of an individual.

The early Chinese immigrants continued to practice traditional folk medicine partly because they believed in it and partly because they were barred by language and prejudice from treatment by Western doctors. In Chinatowns before the Second World War, the common form of medical treatment was herbal medicine. It was not until recent decades, with demand and interest both from the wider public and newly arrived Chinese immigrants, that other forms of treatment such as acupuncture, medical massage, and *qi gong* became popular. Acupuncture and some herbal products such as ginseng, royal jelly, and various kinds of aphrodisiacs have now gained acceptance among other Canadians. Members of the Chinese community still use many herbal products not only for medical treatment, but also for nourishing and strengthening the spirit as well as the body.



Herbal remedies and patent medicines in a traditional Chinese herbal store in Calgary, 1976. (Photograph by G. Anderson)

Martial Arts

Martial arts have a long tradition in China. *Gong fu* (kung fu) emphasizes force, power, and action; *tai ji* (tai chi) develops inner strength and tranquillity. Each has its own mythology, history, philosophy, and techniques.

Before the Second World War, Chinese martial arts were a preserved tradition within Chinese communities in Canada. Chinese associations promoted and sponsored martial arts classes. Some restaurants were known to hire *gong fu* experts to keep out rowdy and troublesome customers. In some instances, disputes among different factions of the community were settled in matches.

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, Chinese martial arts were popularized by television and movies in North America. Classes and tournaments were organized to train and to propagate the arts. Consequently, many different *gong fu* and *tai ji* schools were established by members of the Chinese community and by other Canadians.

Many schools have adapted the arts to suit local needs and life-styles. By so doing, the arts have become "Canadianized" in some respects, especially in the approaches and the methods of teaching and transmittal. Often the underlying philosophies and principles are not emphasized and the focus is on self-defence, physical fitness, health improvement, and tension reduction. Some martial arts techniques have also been adapted for dancing.

There are different styles and schools of *gong fu*; only three will be described here.

The White Crane school derives its styles from the fighting postures of the crane and the tiger and combines these with the footwork of the monkey. An expert who has achieved the highest level of this art is said to be capable of transforming interchangeably into a crane, tiger, and monkey and to assume the fighting skills of these animals.

In the "Dragon Shape" school, the style is based on the movements of the dragon together with the fighting postures of the snake and the bird. A highly skilled performer of this art would appear to be like a spirited dragon traversing the universe.

The style of the Yong Chun school was developed by a female *gong fu* expert who perfected the art learned from her master and combined it with the fighting skills of the snake and the crane. The hand movements are complex. It is known to be very effective for self-defence and short-distance attack.

Weapons are used to complement the art of *gong fu*. They are considered as extensions of the body, reaching out to the larger universe.

Tai ji, according to one legend on its origins, was developed by

Zhang Sunfeng, a Daoist (Taoist) high priest of the Sung dynasty (A.D. 960–1275). His skill was so perfect that he could catch ghosts and other invisible spirits.

Like *gong fu*, there are also different styles of *tai ji*; some examples are the Chen, the Yang, the Wu, the Sun and the Fu schools. Each has different emphasis and perspectives; only the Yang school is discussed here.

The Yang school was developed by the masters Yang Lou-shan and Yang Deng-fu. Its style stresses graceful movements, tranquillity, stability, naturalness, and concentration. An expert should have a powerful inner force capable of subduing external forces. Movements should be as smooth as a reflection in the mirror. A turn, for instance, should be as natural as pulling silk.

Sifu F. Lee, a gong fu master, demonstrates the White Crane gong fu style with a sword. Edmonton, 1976. (Photograph by G. Anderson)

Traditional Music and Opera

Folk music and opera reflect the socio-cultural life of a people. The distinctive traditions and characteristics of an ethnic musical style and opera evolve over many years.

In early Chinese communities in Canada, music and opera societies were formed to provide a cultural outlet and a source of entertainment; they were also a means of raising funds for community projects and for relief and welfare work in China.

In Chinese communities across the country, there are now many societies that are concerned with music and opera. These societies promote and study Chinese music and opera and provide a means of communication and exchange among the Chinese and with other cultural groups.

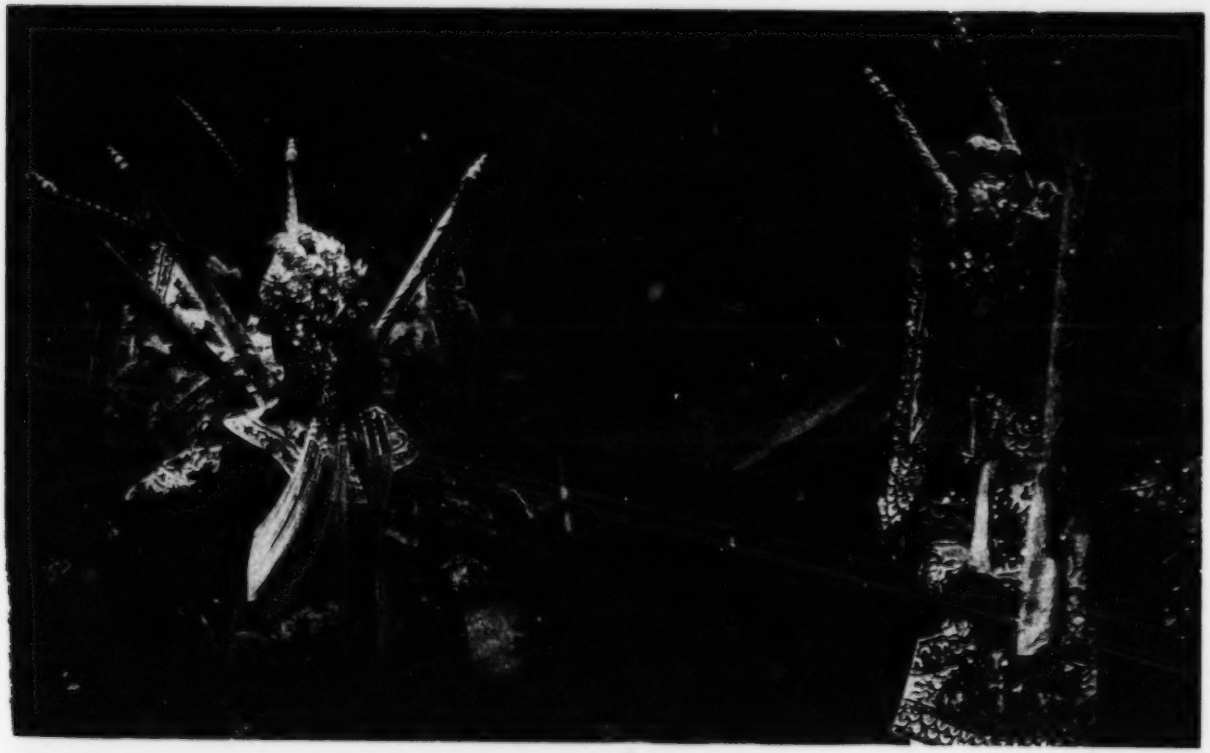
Chinese musicians with their friends in a Chinese church in Victoria, ca. 1890. (Courtesy of the British Columbia Archives and Records Service, cat. no. HP55506)

Most older societies, such as the Qing Yun and the Zheng Hua Sheng of Vancouver, stage full-scale operas accompanied by their own musical troupes. Their music is mostly traditional Cantonese. Their repertoires are complex and wide ranging and are derived from Chinese history, politics, mythology, legends, palace intrigues, folk stories, romantic epics, and everyday life.

Some music and opera societies still adhere to traditional rituals and ceremonies. They install altars for their patron gods and goddesses and make offerings on their birthdays and other festive occasions.

Nowadays, the Chinese music and opera societies not only

perform at their own community festivals and social functions but also participate in the nation's cultural life. For instance, they give performances during the Christmas season and on Canada Day. Some societies even stage operas in English and French.



scene from a Cantonese opera performed by the Scarborough Chinese Dramatic ociety, 1988, in which a general spars with his princess wife. (Photograph by Lenczewski)

Lion and Dragon Dances

Both the lion and dragon are symbols of prosperity and peace in Chinese traditions. The dances created from the legends and stories of these creatures are usually performed by martial arts clubs at joyous and auspicious occasions such as community festivals, national holidays, openings of associations and businesses, and visits of dignitaries.

Lion and dragon dances are performed in Chinatowns, complete with a display of colourful banners, weapons, and other accoutrements and accompanied by the beating of gongs and cymbals and the noise of firecrackers. Amid all this, the community comes together to watch the performance, symbolizing the solidarity and good will of its members.

During the lion dance, the lion winds through Chinatown and goes from door to door, paying homage to associations, businesses, and residents. It

A performance of the dragon dance in Vancouver's Chinatown, 1968. (Courtesy of the Vancouver Public Library, neg. no. 48309)

picks up packages wrapped in red paper containing "lucky money" and vegetables. Before accepting the red package, the lion performs a variety of dances. The choice of a particular dance technique depends on the pattern of offering. If, for example, a pattern called "poisonous snake blocks the road" is offered (a stick symbolizes the snake and two bowls its eyes), the lion must snap at the head of the snake before picking up the red package. Failure to do so will incur criticism from "qualified" onlookers.

In the dragon dance, the number of dancers depends on the size of the dragon or vice versa. It is usually led by a huge pearl, which the dragon pursues. The dragon dances up and down and turns and rolls, as if it were traversing the universe or moving on water.

A lion's head is examined before a performance of the lion dance at an international fall fair, Vancouver, 1960. (Courtesy of the Vancouver Sun *and the National Archives of Canada, PA-148770)*

Folk Dances

Folk dances require the cooperation and coordination of a number of dancers. They reflect the collective wisdom and traditions of a people.

Chinese folk dance groups became popular after the Second World War. With the repeal of restrictive immigration laws, there were more children to train as dancers and more dance instructors. As well opportunities to perform in a variety of cultural events such as community celebrations, parades, intercultural fairs, and multicultural shows increased.

The folk-dance repertoire is varied and complex. For example, the Flower Embroidery Dance depicts the daily life and behaviour of a village girl; the Autumn Moon in the Han Palace Dance is about a palace girl who longs for a marriage and life outside the palace; the Tea-Picking Dance concerns a group of young girls who had been picking tea leaves on the hills and who, on their way home, are enchanted by butterflies and try to catch and play with them; and the Shepherd Boy and the Village Girl Dance involves an encounter of a village girl on a spring jaunt with a little shepherd boy, whom she asks where she can get some good wine.

A dancer performs a traditional Chinese folk dance, "Autumn Moon in the Han Palace," Vancouver, 1982. (Courtesy of the Lorita Leung Dance Group)

Departure Sorrow," first scene from the dance drama The Golden Mountain, *'ancouver, 1984. (Courtesy of the Lorita Leung Dance Group)*

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A variety of business signs in Toronto's Chinatown, 1987. (Photograph by J.-P. Camus and J. Lenczewski)

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Ten Thousand Blossoms Greet the Arrival of Spring, *a southern-style painting by the late Stephen Lowe of Victoria. (Courtesy of Mrs. Eunice Lowe, Victoria; photograph by R. Garner)*

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Street scene, Vancouver's Chinatown, 1987. (Photograph by J.-P. Camus and J. Lenczewski)

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Tam Gong, a folk deity from the villages of southern China. (Courtesy of the Hum Kwong Yu Tong of Eastern Canada, Montréal; photograph by R. Garner)

Calligraphy and Painting

Chinese calligraphy and painting are as old as Chinese civilization itself. Years of training, practice, and hard work go into shaping the artist.

Not many of the early Chinese immigrants to Canada were accomplished in calligraphy and painting. The art of calligraphy found limited expression in signs for commercial premises or other forms of advertisement; the skill and knowledge of the local school teacher was usually called upon on these occasions.

After the Second World War, interest in the ancient arts of Chinese calligraphy and painting began to grow. This was mainly a result of an influx of Chinese immigrants who were skilled and experienced in these art forms. Now Chinese calligraphy and painting classes are offered by community schools, associations, and cultural centres. Chinese communities sponsor exhibits of calligraphy and painting by local and international artists. In addition, associations and cultural societies have been formed to promote these arts. Chinese art, in all its richness and diversity, is making its mark on Canada's cultural scene.

There are six main calligraphic styles: oracle-bone script; large and small seal script (*zhuan shu*); official script (*li shu*); standard script (*zheng ti*, or *kai shu*); running script (*xing shu*); and cursive (*coashu*) script. They are ordered here from the oldest—incised oracle bone scripts date from the Shang dynasty (1766–1122 B.C.)—to the more modern scripts. Each style requires certain brush strokes, executed with the speed and force required to produce the stroke, and has its own characteristic shapes, lines, formality, and balance. The choice of style depends on the content of the text and on the training and preference of the calligrapher. Like any work of art, calligraphy reveals not only the artist's skill but also his or her creative spirit.

The different traditional styles of Chinese painting can be broadly divided into two categories. The southern style stresses harmony, gentleness and subtlety in using brush and ink; the northern style emphasizes fine, accentuated brush lines. Thousands of years old, Chinese painting expresses a seemingly endless variation in styles, techniques, and themes.

Calligraphy and painting are often used together in Chinese works of art. Poems are a favourite theme in calligraphy and can be linked to the subject of a painting—three forms of artistic expression are thus harmonized and unified into a complex whole.

Little Birds and Maple Leaves, *1988, by Vancouver artist Johnson Chow.*
(Photograph by R. Garner)

Religious and Folk Beliefs

Temples dedicated to the worship of legendary heroes, historical figures, Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, Daoist (Taoist) immortals, and other dieties were common in the villages of southern China. The early Chinese immigrants brought these dieties with them to Canada. Tam Gong, the Heavenly Empress, the God of War, the God of Wealth, the God of Earth, the God of Medicine, the Kitchen God, and the music and opera dieties are still venerated by Chinese Canadians.

Tam Gong is a benevolent diety who has the power to help seafarers. According to legend Tam Gong was a cowherder who transformed himself into a diety. People seek help from him regarding personal and family matters, business forecasts, career decisions, a possible marriage, safety during travels, the best location for a house, and sickness.

Guan Gong, the God of War, is known for his loyalty, righteousness, and courage. He was a famous army general from early times who was popularized in a fourteenth-century historical novel, *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms*. He has the power to dispel evil and restore goodness.

After the Second World War Buddhism and Daoism (Taoism), long practised in China, began to find followers in Canada. Before the war, few Buddhist and Daoist priests came to Canada.

Buddhist and Daoist temples are devoted to the promotion and study of Buddhism and Daoism and to the search for peace, harmony, enlightenment, and happiness. Buddhist temples in Canada worship most of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas; Daoist temples venerate Lao Zi (the founder of Daoism), Zhang San-Feng (a Daoist high priest), and the eight Daoist Immortals. Buddhist and Daoist temples offer religious and memorial services to the community.

Many Chinese Canadians are also members of Christian churches.

Church members assemble for a group photograph in commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of Victoria's Chinese United Church (1885-1935). (Courtesy of the British Columbia Archives and Records Service, cat. no. HP 28996)

The Chinese in Contemporary Canada

As a result of large-scale Chinese immigration from different parts of the world in recent times, the Chinese community has been transformed and differentiated internally into several sub-groups with different dialects and localized cultural traditions. Cantonese and the *shi yi* dialect are no longer the common languages of the Chinese community.

A more open Canadian society since the Second World War has allowed for greater participation of the Chinese in all walks of life. They now engage in many different professions, economic enterprises, and socio-cultural endeavours. The derogatory chant "Chink Chink laundryman" has no basis in today's society.

With better access to economic resources, old Chinatowns are being revitalized, and new shopping centres and satellite Chinatowns created. Many Chinese communities are now prosperous and vibrant. Chinatown has become an ethnic marker; the participation in its social and cultural activities and institutions defines one's ethnic identity. The Chinese community is as complex and vocal as any other ethnic community in the country.

Chinese cultural activities have also been influenced by the larger society. Chinese Canadians now engage in such activities as Miss Chinatown contests, radio and television programmes, Canadian-style arts and crafts, and nouvelle cuisine.

Some Chinese Canadians even make green fortune cookies on St. Patrick's Day and prepare pink bean-curd hearts on Valentine's Day. They also celebrate Western New Year's, Thankgiving, Easter, Christmas, and Canada Day. Some use Canadian holidays to engage in traditional Chinese activities, such as visiting their parents' graves at Easter or on Father's and Mother's Days.

On the other hand, Chinese cultural traditions have left their mark on Canadian society as a whole. Many Canadians have adopted some traditional Chinese customs, such as cooking with a wok and Chinese spices, preparing stir-fry dishes, using chopsticks, wearing Chinese-style clothing, and incorporating cultural symbols and motifs in works of art. Some even use rickshaws as wedding carriages.

The Chinese have come along way from the disadvantaged minority they were to the successful cultural group within the plurality of Canadian society they now are. Today they are proud of their achievements and contributions to Canada and continue to exert and express their ethnic and Canadian identities in terms of their cultural traditions. Unlike the old pioneer immigrants who came to the country in search of gold and economic opportunity, the subsequent generations and the newcomers search for equality, liberty, and a better quality of life and make a commitment to serve and contribute to the country. They have looked beyond the golden mountain.

About the Author

Ban Seng Hoe was born in Batu Pahat, Johore, Malaysia. He studied Asian culture, history, education, international law, and social work at Nanyang University and the University of Singapore. He obtained a master's degree in sociology from the University of Alberta and his doctorate in anthropology and sociology from Vanderbilt University, Nashville, Tennessee, in 1974. The same year Dr. Hoe joined the Canadian Museum of Civilization, where he founded the Asian and Middle Eastern Programme. He is now Curator of Asian Studies at the Museum.

Dr. Hoe has lectured widely in the field of Asian culture. He speaks over 14 languages and dialects and has published two books and numerous articles in North American and Asian journals. He has also curated many exhibitions related to Asian studies, the most recent being "The First Emperor of China" and "Beyond the Golden Mountain," for which this booklet was prepared.

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